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C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 001425

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/06/2019
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [PINR](#) [BL](#)
SUBJECT: POLLS: MAS TO SWEEP, MAY WIN TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY

REF: A. LA PAZ 1359
[1](#)B. LA PAZ 496

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires John Creamer for reasons 1.4 (b, d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Three recently-published polls -- including an unreleased, privately-commissioned poll by Stanley Greenberg's firm -- confirm President Evo Morales and his ruling Movement Toward Socialism party (MAS) are well positioned to sweep the December 6 elections. Morales is favored to win the presidency in the first round, and the MAS should win a healthy majority in both the House of Deputies and the Senate, giving them the ability to pass important constitutional implementing legislation. If Morales' coattails extend to deputy-level races, the MAS could even reach an overall two-thirds majority, which would give them the ability to amend the Constitution if necessary. The Greenberg poll highlights structural deficiencies in lead challenger Manfred Reyes Villa's campaign and notes that second opposition candidate Samuel Doria Medina's image is worsening. Even if the opposition unites, polling shows it would not significantly improve its chances of holding on to the Senate. End summary.

Polls: Morales Wins, MAS Takes Assembly

[1](#)2. (C) Three recent polls by Ipsos Apoyo, Equipo Mori, and Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research indicate that President Morales has a commanding lead in the presidential race over the divided opposition. Polling also shows that the MAS is likely to wrest Senate control from the opposition, giving Morales a clear path to implement his political project (the transformation or "refounding" of Bolivia on behalf of indigenous and other socially-disadvantaged groups) for the first time. However, the polls do not indicate whether the public will give Morales a two-thirds majority in the overall Plurinational Assembly (i.e. both houses of Congress together) and with this the flexibility to amend the Constitution.

[1](#)3. (C) Polls do not agree on a likely vote total for President Morales, but all project that he will win in the first round of elections. To avoid a second round of voting, Morales must win more than 50 percent of the vote or take at least 40 percent of the vote with no other challenger within

10 points of his total. Not all polls show Morales over 50 percent, but they set his lead over main rival Manfred Reyes Villa at 30 points or more. Some pundits argue that a Morales win with less than the 54 percent he took in December 2005 would damage the MAS, but the massive gulf between Morales and his rivals also nixes the possibility of any opposition claim of a "moral victory."

¶4. (C) All three polls show the MAS taking the Senate with either 22 or 23 of the 36 available seats. The D'Hondt method of awarding seats (reftel B) rewards dominant parties such as the MAS, and the MAS's lead is strong enough that even were all three main opposition candidates to unite under a single banner, they would likely gain only one additional seat. As it stands, the opposition candidates continue to insist that they will neither unite nor leave the race. In any case, there seems to be little chance of preventing a significant MAS majority in the Senate.

¶5. (C) All experts agree the MAS will retain lower house control, but it is difficult to project whether they could gain enough seats in the lower house to reach an overall two-thirds majority in the Plurinational Assembly. The Assembly's lower house is divided into 70 "uninominal" seats (i.e. direct candidate vote), 53 "plurinominal" seats (i.e. by party list), and seven special/reserved indigenous seats. According to the Equipos Mori poll, the MAS is projected to win 31 of the 53 plurinominal seats. Assuming this is correct, and that the MAS take 23 Senate seats and all seven of the special indigenous seats, the MAS would then need to win 49 of the 70 uninominal seats to reach a two-thirds

overall majority. As parties may change their list of direct-vote candidates until October 17, no polls are available to project uninominal results, but the MAS has a chance to reach this goal.

¶6. (C) Our contacts add that neither Manfred Reyes Villa nor Samuel Doria Medina have thus far offered a competitive slate of lower house candidates, further assisting the MAS. Much will depend on how well President Morales performs, and whether his coattails extend into the uninominal races, which will turn on local political issues as much as national ones.

Opposition Out of Luck?

¶7. (C) Reyes Villa may still be privately bullish (reftel A) on his chances to unseat President Morales, but the Greenberg poll shows he may have limited himself by focusing on a core constituency of hardline "anti-Evo" voters. Moreover, the Greenberg poll shows he has a 60 percent unfavorable rating. His pick of jailed ex-Prefect Leopoldo Fernandez as a vice presidential candidate further cements his image as a far-right candidate. The Greenberg poll highlights that 51 percent of voters nationally believe Fernandez is responsible for the September 2008 Pando conflict in which 13 people (mostly government supporters) died, while only 27 percent believe he is innocent. Related to this, the poll reports that 65 percent of the public view Fernandez unfavorably, while only 15 percent view him favorably. While conceding that he is viewed as a strong leader, the Greenberg poll states that Reyes Villa -- who was voted out of his position as Cochabamba prefect in the August 2008 revocatory referendum -- would likely take only one Senate seat in his home department, conceding the other three to the MAS.

¶8. (C) The Greenberg poll is kinder to Samuel Doria Medina, noting that he has a higher favorability rating than Reyes Villa (37 percent to 32 percent), has greater potential nationally by appealing more to moderates, and is seen as more likely than Reyes Villa to create job growth. Still, Doria Medina has not shown growth in his polling figures, has seen his favorability rating drop, and does not seem likely to convince Reyes Villa to leave the race. (Note: The Greenberg team reports to a Santa Cruz business roundtable connected with Senate President Oscar Ortiz, who is now

aligned with Doria Medina's campaign. This could affect the tone of the poll's findings. End note.)

¶9. (C) In contrast, the Greenberg poll shows Morales is expanding his base to include moderates and middle-class voters. Morales leads in almost all national categories, whether broken out by gender, class, or ethnicity. Morales leads among urban voters as well as rural. If all three major opposition candidates (including Potosi Mayor Rene Joaquin) were combined, they would barely challenge Morales even among university graduates and mestizos, core opposition constituencies.

Comment

¶10. (C) With time slipping away, Reyes Villa and Doria Medina are still negotiating over leadership of the opposition, allowing President Morales the political time and space to expand his base by appealing to moderates. Unless Reyes Villa and Doria Medina can ally and blunt Morales' growing momentum in less than two months -- a Herculean task -- the only question left will be about the margin of Morales' victory. End comment.
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